F. Independent Research and Development (IR&D)

Independent Research and Development is R&D initiated and conducted by defense contractors independent of DoD control and without direct DoD funding. Major defense contractors spend about $3 billion annually on thousands of IR&D projects. These projects provide an important supplement to R&D funded directly by DoD. Defense contractors recover a portion of their IR&D spending as an indirect expense on government contracts

Defense contractors and DoD play complementary roles with respect to IR&D activities. Primary control of these activities rests with the contractors, who are free to determine both the amount of their IR&D activities and the focus of these activities. However, contractors are motivated to focus on technical areas of interest to DoD. While contractors are no longer required to report IR&D plans and accomplishments to DoD, they do advertise their technical capabilities to potential DoD customers. Most major contractors provide information to DoD about their IR&D activities through technical interchange meetings (TIMs) with DoD representatives and with IR&D project descriptions submitted to the Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC) for inclusion in the IR&D Database. DoD influences IR&D decisionmaking by providing contractors with information about DoD-funded R&D and defense technological needs through documents, conferences, and meetings.

DTIC collects and maintains thousands of IR&D project summaries submitted by defense contractors in a restricted-access database. The IR&D Database can be accessed by registered DoD users over a secure internet link and is used to identify technological capabilities applicable to defense needs and to avoid duplication of contractor IR&D activities by R&D funded directly by DoD.

In November, 2000, DoD prepared an IR&D Action Plan to improve the processes within DoD and industry for managing IR&D activities and to increase the effectiveness of IR&D spending to support national defense needs. The Plan focuses on improving communications between DoD and industry regarding defense technology needs and contractor IR&D accomplishments.

During FY01, the Technical Coordinating Group (TCG), a senior level steering group for the IR&D program, met twice to guide and review the Action Plan and associated implementing activities. A Working Group is the driving force behind implementation of the Action Plan. During FY01, the Working Group instituted monthly meetings to coordinate IR&D Program activities and to ensure continuing progress in efforts to strengthen the IR&D Program.

Outreach efforts have been increased to educate DoD personnel about IR&D accomplishments and about requirements to consider contractor IR&D in DoD S&T

planning. The IR&D Program is working with DoD schools, such as the Defense Acquisition University/Defense Systems Management College, to ensure IR&D issues are covered in relevant acquisition courses. A Web-based survey of DoD personnel is collecting information to assess awareness of IR&D issues within DoD and to help develop additional strategies to ensure efficient and effective use of IR&D information throughout DoD. To raise basic awareness of IR&D, a brochure for DoD personnel was distributed at technical meetings and conferences.

Websites are becoming an increasingly important means of communications for the IR&D Program. Industry can access information about DoD's R&D plans and activities and about DoD's mission needs and operational requirements at various sites (some with restricted access) sponsored by OSD, the Military Departments, and other DoD Components. The number of sites and volume of information pose a challenge to any company wishing to identify defense R&D activities and technological requirements that correspond to the company's capabilities. The IR&D Program developed a website that concisely presents all the relevant information needed for an understanding of the IR&D program. The site is available at http://www.dtic.mil/ird/ .

The TCG and working group continue to meet regularly to complete Action Plan activities and to assess how well the IR&D program is working.